

## Stability of solutions of Neumann problems with singular potential

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RIASSUNTO – *Si studia la stabilità variazionale della soluzione di un problema di Neumann rispetto a perturbazioni del termine di potenziale che, nel modello considerato, può essere altamente singolare.*

ABSTRACT – *We study the variational stability of the solution of a Neumann problem with respect to perturbations of the potential term which, in the model considered, can be highly singular.*

KEY WORDS – *Neumann problem - Variational stability - Singular potentials.*

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### – Introduction

Let us consider the following Neumann problem

$$(N) \quad \begin{cases} -\Delta u + b \cdot Du + \mu u = f & \text{in } \Omega \\ \frac{\partial u}{\partial \nu} = 0 & \text{on } \partial\Omega. \end{cases}$$

where  $\mu$  is a non negative Borel measure on  $\Omega$ , a bounded open subset of  $\mathbb{R}^N$  with Lipschitz boundary  $\partial\Omega$  and outward normal  $\nu$ , playing the role of a possibly singular potential,  $b$  and  $f$  are, respectively, a given vector field and function on  $\Omega$ . The existence of a weak solution to (N) has been

proved in [11] under some assumptions on the measure  $\mu$  (see §1 for the precise statement).

In this paper we are interested in the behaviour of the solution of (N) under suitable perturbations of the measure  $\mu$ . The motivation for such a study relies on the fact that a unified formulation for a large class of boundary value problems can be given in the form (N) for special choice of  $\mu$ . Let us mention here, as an example the limit problems in the homogenization of composite media with holes (see [4], [5]). Other significant examples can be found in [7], [8].

### 1 - Preliminary facts and lemmas

Following [8], [9], let us denote by  $\mathcal{M}_0$  the set of all nonnegative Borel measures on  $\Omega$  which are absolutely continuous with respect to the capacity (i.e. such that  $\mu(E) = 0$  if  $\text{cap}(E) = 0$ ), by  $L^2(\Omega, \mu)$  the space of measurable functions whose square is summable with respect to  $\mu$  on  $\Omega$  and by  $V$  the Hilbert space  $H^1(\Omega) \cap L^2(\Omega, \mu)$ .

A weak solution of (N) is a function  $u \in V$  such that

$$(1.1) \quad \int_{\Omega} Du \cdot D\phi dx + \int_{\Omega} b \cdot Du\phi dx + \int_{\Omega} u\phi d\mu = \int_{\Omega} f\phi dx$$

for every  $\phi \in V$ . It has been proved in [11] that if  $b \in L^\infty(\Omega)$ ,  $\mu \in \mathcal{M}_0$ ,  $\mu(\Omega) \neq 0$ , then problem (N) has a unique weak solution for any right hand side  $f \in L^2(\Omega)$ .

We shall always assume in the sequel that  $f \in L^2(\Omega)$  and  $b \in L^\infty(\Omega)$ .

The resolvent operator  $R_\mu^\Omega: L^2(\Omega) \rightarrow V$ , is well defined by  $R_\mu^\Omega(f) = u$ , the unique weak solution of the following problem:

$$(D) \quad \begin{cases} -\Delta u + \mu u = f & \text{in } \Omega \\ u = 0 & \text{on } \partial\Omega. \end{cases}$$

(See [8])

According to [8] (see also [2]) a sequence  $\{\mu_h\} \in \mathcal{M}_0$  is said to  $\gamma$ -converge to  $\mu \in \mathcal{M}_0$  if  $R_{\mu_h}^\Omega(f) \rightarrow R_\mu^\Omega(f)$  strongly in  $L^2(\Omega)$ , for every  $f \in L^2(\Omega)$  and every open bounded  $\Omega \subset \mathbb{R}^N$ .

This definition is related to that of  $\Gamma$ -convergence as introduced in [10] (see also [6]). Let us consider now the perturbed problems:

$$(N_h) \quad \begin{cases} -\Delta u_h + b \cdot Du_h + \mu_h u_h = f & \text{in } \Omega \\ \frac{\partial u_h}{\partial \nu} = 0 & \text{on } \partial\Omega. \end{cases}$$

A basic fact which will be useful later is expressed in the following:

LEMMA 1. *Let  $u_h$  be a weak solution of  $(N)_h$ . If  $\|u_h\|_{L^2(\Omega)} \leq C$  then  $\|Du_h\|_{L^2(\Omega)} \leq C'$ , for constant  $C'$  independent on  $h$ .*

PROOF. The choice  $\phi = u_h$  in the weak formulation of  $(N)_h$  and the nonnegativity of  $\mu_h$  yield

$$\|Du_h\|_{L^2(\Omega)}^2 + \int_{\Omega} (b \cdot Du_h) u_h dx \leq \|f\|_{L^2(\Omega)} \|u_h\|_{L^2(\Omega)}.$$

This gives

$$\|Du_h\|_{L^2(\Omega)}^2 \leq \|u_h\|_{L^2(\Omega)} (\|f\|_{L^2(\Omega)} + \|b\|_{L^2(\Omega)} \|Du_h\|_{L^2(\Omega)});$$

by the Young inequality the assertion follows.  $\square$

Let us associate to any Borel subset  $E$  of  $\Omega$  its  $\mu$ -capacity  $\text{cap}_{\mu}(E, \Omega)$  by setting:

$$\text{cap}_{\mu}(E, \Omega) = \min \left\{ \int_{\Omega} |Du|^2 dx + \int_E |u|^2 d\mu : u - 1 \in H_0^1(\Omega) \right\};$$

it is proved in [11] that if  $\mu_h \xrightarrow{\gamma} \mu$ , then

$$(1.2) \quad \lim_{h \rightarrow \infty} \text{cap}_{\mu_h}(E, \Omega) = \text{cap}_{\mu}(E, \Omega)$$

for every  $E \in R_{\mu}$  with  $E \subset\subset \Omega$ , where  $R_{\mu}$  is a special subclass of the Borel family (see [9]).

A basic tool for the sequel is the following Poincaré's type inequality (see [11] for the proof):

LEMMA 2. Let  $\mu \in \mathcal{M}_0$  with  $\mu(\Omega) > 0$ . Then there exists a constant  $K = K(\Omega)$  independent of  $\mu$  and a domain  $\Omega'$ , with  $\Omega \subset \subset \Omega'$  such that

$$\int_{\Omega} u^2(x) dx \leq \frac{K(\Omega)}{\text{cap}_{\mu}(\Omega, \Omega')} \left\{ \int_{\Omega} |Du|^2 dx + \int_{\Omega} |u|^2 d\mu \right\}$$

for any  $u \in H^1(\Omega)$ .

As a consequence of this we have:

LEMMA 3. Let us assume  $\Omega \in R_{\mu}$ ,  $\mu_k \in \mathcal{M}_0$  where  $\mu_k \xrightarrow{\gamma} \mu$ ,  $\mu_k(\Omega) \neq 0$  and  $g_k \in L^2(\Omega)$ ,  $g_k \rightarrow g$  weakly in  $L^2(\Omega)$ .

Then the sequence  $\{u_k\}$  of the weak solutions of

$$(1.3_k) \quad \begin{cases} -\Delta u_k + u_k \mu_k = g_k & \text{in } \Omega \\ \frac{\partial u_k}{\partial \nu} = 0 & \text{on } \partial\Omega. \end{cases}$$

converges strongly in  $L^2(\Omega)$  to a weak solution  $u$  of the problem:

$$(1.3) \quad \begin{cases} -\Delta u + u\mu = g & \text{in } \Omega \\ \frac{\partial u}{\partial \nu} = 0 & \text{on } \partial\Omega. \end{cases}$$

PROOF. Indeed in [9] it has been proved that the functionals

$$F_k(u) = \begin{cases} \int_{\Omega} u^2 d\mu_k + \int_{\Omega} |Du|^2 dx & \text{if } u \in H^1(\Omega) \\ +\infty & \text{elsewhere in } L^2(\Omega) \end{cases}$$

are  $\Gamma$ -convergent in  $L^2(\Omega)$  to

$$F(u) = \begin{cases} \int_{\Omega} u^2 d\mu + \int_{\Omega} |Du|^2 dx & \text{if } u \in H^1(\Omega) \\ +\infty & \text{elsewhere in } L^2(\Omega) \end{cases}$$

If we call  $G_k = -2 \int_{\Omega} g_k u dx$ , applying the definition of  $\Gamma$ -convergence it is easy to prove that  $F_k(u) + G_k(u)$  are  $\Gamma$ -converging in  $L^2(\Omega)$  to  $F(u) + G(u)$

and that for every  $\lambda \in \mathbb{R}$  there exists a compact set  $K_\lambda \subset L^2(\Omega)$  such that:

$$\{v \in L^2(\Omega) : F_k(v) + G_k(v) \leq \lambda\} \subset K_\lambda \quad \text{for every } h \in \mathbb{N}.$$

Indeed, for any  $v \in H^1(\Omega)$  such that  $F_k(v) + G_k(v) \leq \lambda$ , applying the preceding lemma, and (1.2), we obtain

$$\begin{aligned} & -2\|v\|_{L^2(\Omega)}\|g_k\|_{L^2(\Omega)} + \frac{\text{cap}_\mu(\Omega, \Omega')}{K(\Omega)} \int_\Omega v^2 dx \leq \\ & \leq -2\|v\|_{L^2(\Omega)}\|g_k\|_{L^2(\Omega)} + \frac{\text{cap}_{\mu_k}(\Omega, \Omega')}{K'(\Omega)} \int_\Omega v^2 dx \leq \\ & \leq -2\|v\|_{L^2(\Omega)}\|g_k\|_{L^2(\Omega)} + \int_\Omega v^2 d\mu_k + \int_\Omega |Dv|^2 dx \leq \\ & \leq \int_\Omega v^2 d\mu_k + \int_\Omega |Dv|^2 dx - 2 \int_\Omega g_k v dx \leq \lambda. \end{aligned}$$

And if we call  $\|v\|_{L^2(\Omega)} = y$ , we obtain  $-K_1 y + k_2 y^2 \leq \lambda$  and then  $\|v\|_{L^2(\Omega)} \leq K$ . On the other hand, we have  $\int_\Omega |Dv|^2 dx \leq \lambda + 2 \int_\Omega g_k v dx \leq 2\|v\|_{L^2(\Omega)}\|g_k\|_{L^2(\Omega)}$  and then,  $\|v\|_{H^1(\Omega)} \leq K$ . By the Rellich theorem we have the statement of the lemma because the weak solutions of the problem  $(1.3)_k$  are the minimum points of  $(F_k + G_k)(u)$  and this implies the convergence in  $L^2(\Omega)$  of the weak solutions  $u_k$  of  $(1.3)_k$  to the weak solution  $u$  of (1.3). □

**2 – Stability results: the case  $\mu(\Omega) \neq 0$**

We are now in position to state a stability result for problem (N) under the main assumption that  $\mu(\Omega) \neq 0$ ; we want to recall that this hypothesis implies that the problem (N) has a unique solution and this will be the basic tool for the proof.

**THEOREM 2.1.** *Let  $\{\mu_h\}, \mu$  be measures in  $\mathcal{M}_0$  and  $\Omega$  a domain in  $R_\mu$ . Let us assume that*

(A1)  $\mu_h(\Omega) \neq 0$  for every  $h \in N$  and  $\mu(\Omega) \neq 0$ .

(A2)  $\{\mu_h\}$   $\gamma$ -converges to  $\mu$ , as  $h \rightarrow +\infty$ .

Then, the weak solutions  $u_h$  of  $(N)_h$  converge weakly in  $H^1(\Omega)$  as  $h \rightarrow +\infty$  to the weak solution  $u$  of (1).

PROOF. Let us show first that

$$(2.1) \quad \|u_h\|_{L^2(\Omega)} \leq C.$$

for some constant  $C$  independent of  $h$ .

It is not the case, then

$$\|u_{h_k}\|_{L^2(\Omega)} \rightarrow \infty \quad \text{as } k \rightarrow +\infty$$

for a subsequence  $\{u_{h_k}\}$  of  $\{u_h\}$ .

Observe now that  $v_k = u_{h_k} / \|u_{h_k}\|_{L^2(\Omega)}$  is a weak solution of

$$(2.2) \quad \begin{cases} -\Delta v_k + b \cdot Dv_k + \mu_{h_k} v_k = \frac{f}{\|u_{h_k}\|_{L^2(\Omega)}} & \text{in } \Omega \\ \frac{\partial v_k}{\partial \nu} = 0 & \text{on } \partial\Omega. \end{cases}$$

and that

$$(2.3) \quad \|v_k\|_{L^2(\Omega)} = 1.$$

The Lemma 1 implies that

$$\|v_k\|_{H^1(\Omega)} \leq C.$$

Let  $v$  be a weak subsequential limit in  $H^1(\Omega)$  of  $v_k$ .

By Lemma 3, applied with  $g_k = f / \|f_{h_k}\|_{L^2(\Omega)} - b \cdot Dv_k$ , we can pass to the limit in (2.2) to show that  $v$  is a solution of

$$\begin{cases} -\Delta v + b \cdot Dv + \mu v = 0 & \text{in } \Omega \\ \frac{\partial v}{\partial \nu} = 0 & \text{on } \partial\Omega. \end{cases}$$

Hence, by uniqueness,  $v = 0$ , contradicting (2.3).

Therefore (2.1) is proved and lemma 1 again yields

$$\|u_{h_k}\|_{H^1(\Omega)} \leq C'.$$

At this point it is enough to apply Lemma 3 with  $g_k = f - b \cdot Du_{h_k}$ , to complete the proof.  $\square$

REMARK. The same result holds if we allow  $L^\infty$ -perturbations of  $b$  and weak  $L^2$ -perturbations of  $f$ .

### 3 – Stability results: the case $\mu(\Omega) = 0$

In this section we shall establish results on the convergence of the sequence of solutions of the problems  $(N)_h$  when  $\mu_h$   $\gamma$ -converge to  $\mu = 0$  as  $h \rightarrow +\infty$ .

We shall confine ourselves to measures  $\mu_h \in \mathcal{M}_0$  having density with respect to the Lebesgue measure  $L$ . We shall therefore assume that

$$(A3) \quad \mu_h = q_h L$$

with  $q_h$  a non negative Borel function on  $\Omega$ . In the general case, the basic  $L^2$  estimate in Theorems 3.1 and 3.2 below is an open question.

Let us recall that the Neumann problem

$$(N_0) \quad \begin{cases} -\Delta u + b \cdot Du = f & \text{in } \Omega \\ \frac{\partial u}{\partial \nu} = 0 & \text{on } \partial\Omega. \end{cases}$$

has a weak solutions  $u$  if and only if the right hand side  $f$  satisfies

$$(A4) \quad \int_{\Omega} f m \, dx = 0$$

where  $m$  is the strictly positive solution of the adjoint problem:

$$\begin{cases} -\Delta m - \operatorname{div}(bm) = 0 & \text{in } \Omega \\ \frac{\partial m}{\partial \nu} + b \cdot \nu = 0 & \text{on } \partial\Omega. \end{cases}$$

(see [1] and [3]).

**THEOREM 3.1.** *Let us assume (A3), (A4) and*

(A5)  $q_h \in L^\infty(\Omega)$ ,  $0 \leq q_h \leq K$ ,  $\int_{\Omega} q_h(x) dx > 0$ ,

(A6)  $\int_{\Omega} q_h dx \rightarrow 0$ , as  $h \rightarrow +\infty$ ,

(A7)  $f \in L^s(\Omega)$ , where  $s > N$ ,  $b \in L^\infty(\Omega)$ ,

then there exists a subsequence  $\{u_{h_k}\}$  of solutions of problems  $(N)_h$  converging strongly in  $H^1$  and uniformly to a solution of  $(N)_0$ .

**PROOF.** Let us prove first that

$$(3.1) \quad \|u_h\|_{L^2(\Omega)} \leq C,$$

for some constant  $C$  independent of  $h$ .

Let us assume by contradiction that

$$\|u_{h_k}\|_{L^2(\Omega)} \rightarrow \infty$$

for some subsequence  $\{u_{h_k}\}$  of  $\{u_k\}$ .

Then arguing as in the proof of the Theorem 2.1 one finds that  $v_k = \frac{u_{h_k}}{\|u_{h_k}\|_{L^2(\Omega)}}$  satisfies

$$(3.2) \quad \begin{cases} -\Delta v_k + b \cdot Dv_k + v_k q_{h_k} v_k = \frac{f}{\|u_{h_k}\|_{L^2(\Omega)}} & \text{in } \Omega \\ \frac{\partial v_k}{\partial \nu} = 0 & \text{on } \partial\Omega. \end{cases}$$

Hence by Lemma 1,

$$(3.3) \quad \|v_k\|_{H^1(\Omega)} \leq K.$$

If we set

$$g_k = \frac{f}{\|u_{h_k}\|_{L^2(\Omega)}} - b \cdot Dv_k + v_k(1 - q_{h_k}),$$

then (3.2) reads as

$$(3.4) \quad \begin{cases} -\Delta v_k + v_k = g_k & \text{in } \Omega \\ \frac{\partial v_k}{\partial \nu} = 0 & \text{on } \partial\Omega. \end{cases}$$



By assumption (A7), a boot strap argument shows that  $\|g_k\|_{L^s(\Omega)} \leq K$ , so that  $\{v_k\}$  has a limit, say  $v$ , in  $C(\bar{\Omega})$ . Taking (A6) into account we can pass to the limit in (3.4) to show that  $v$  is a weak solution of

$$(3.5) \quad \begin{cases} -\Delta v + b \cdot Dv = 0 & \text{in } \Omega \\ \frac{\partial v}{\partial \nu} = 0 & \text{on } \partial\Omega. \end{cases}$$

By the maximum principle  $v$  is therefore a constant, say  $v = C$ . On the other hand, the choice  $\phi = m$  in the weak formulation of (3.2) and condition (A4) give

$$\int_{\Omega} v_k q_{h_k} m \, dx = 0 \quad \text{for any } k.$$

Since  $m(x) > 0$  for any  $x \in \Omega$  and  $\int_{\Omega} q_h(x) \, dx > 0$  it follows that  $\int_{\Omega} q_h m \, dx > 0$ . Hence,

$$|C| = \left| \frac{\int_{\Omega} (v_k - C) q_{h_k} m \, dx}{\int_{\Omega} q_{h_k} m \, dx} \right| \leq \|v_k - C\|_{L^\infty(\Omega)} \rightarrow 0,$$

which shows that  $v = C = 0$ .

We have then proved that  $v_k \rightarrow 0$  converges strongly in  $C(\bar{\Omega})$  to 0; this is contradictory with  $\|v_k\|_{L^2(\Omega)} = 1$  and therefore (3.1) is proved.

By Lemma 1,  $u_h$  is uniformly bounded in  $H^1(\Omega)$ . At this point a passage to the limit in  $(N)_h$  using Lemma 3 completes the proof.  $\square$

REMARK. Theorems 3.1 covers the simple case  $q_h = \frac{1}{h}$ . The asymptotic behaviour of  $(N)$  in this case has been investigated for a large class of elliptic operators in [3].

The following result holds under a different convergence assumption on  $q_h$ .

**THEOREM 3.2.** *Let  $N \geq 3$ . Assume that hypotheses (A3) and (A4) are satisfied and that:*

(A8)  $q_h = c_h \psi_h$ , with  $c_h \in \mathbb{R}$ ,  $\psi_h \in L^p(\Omega)$ ,  $p > 2^* = \frac{2N}{N-2}$

(A9)  $\psi_h \geq 0$ ,  $\psi_h \rightarrow \psi$  weakly in  $L^p(\Omega)$ ,  $\int_{\Omega} \psi_h \, dx > 0$ ,  $\int_{\Omega} \psi \, dx > 0$ ,

(A10)  $c_h > 0$  and  $c_h \rightarrow 0$ .

Then the sequence of solutions of  $(N)_h$  converges weakly in  $H^1$  some  $u$  and  $u$  is the solution of  $(N)_0$  such that

$$(3.6) \quad \int_{\Omega} u \psi m \, dx = 0.$$

PROOF. Let us prove first that

$$(3.7) \quad \|u_h\|_{L^2(\Omega)} \leq C.$$

for some constant  $C$  independent of  $h$ .

Let us assume by contradiction that

$$\|u_{h_k}\|_{L^2(\Omega)} \rightarrow \infty$$

for some subsequence  $\{u_{h_k}\}$  of  $\{u_h\}$  and set

$$v_k = \frac{u_{h_k}}{\|u_{h_k}\|_{L^2(\Omega)}}.$$

As in the proof of the Theorem 3.1 one obtains

$$\|v_k\|_{H^1(\Omega)} \leq K.$$

Then there exists  $v \in H^1(\Omega)$  such that

$$\begin{aligned} v_{k_j} &\rightarrow v \text{ weakly in } H^1, \\ v_{k_j} &\rightarrow v \text{ strongly in } L^s \text{ where } s \in [1, 2^*), \end{aligned}$$

at least for a subsequence  $\{v_{k_j}\}$  of  $\{v_k\}$ .

Observe also that, if we call  $v_j = v_{k_j}$ ,  $\psi_j = \psi_{k_j}$ ,  $u_j = u_{h_{k_j}}$ ,  $q_j = q_{k_j}$ , then  $v_j$  satisfies (3.4) with  $g_j = f/\|u_j\|_{L^2(\Omega)} - b \cdot Dv_j + v_j(1 - q_j)$ .

Since by (A8), (A9)

$$\int_{\Omega} v_j \psi_j \phi \, dx \rightarrow \int_{\Omega} v \psi \phi \, dx \quad \text{for any } \phi \in V,$$

a passage to the limit in (3.4) shows that  $v$  is a weak solution of (3.5).

Hence  $v$  is a constant, say  $v = C$ . Taking (A4) into account we obtain:

$$\int_{\Omega} v_j \psi_j m \, dx = 0 \quad \text{for any } j$$

and therefore

$$\int_{\Omega} v \psi m \, dx = 0.$$

On the other hand

$$\int_{\Omega} v \psi m \, dx = C \int_{\Omega} \psi m \, dx.$$

By (A9), and the strict positivity of  $m$  we have  $\int_{\Omega} \psi m \, dx > 0$  and therefore  $v = C = 0$ . This contradicts  $\|v_k\|_{L^2(\Omega)} = 1$  and (3.7) is proved. By Lemma 1,  $u_h$  is uniformly bounded in  $H^1(\Omega)$ . We can now pass to the limit in  $(N)_h$ , taking into account the fact that  $\{u_{h_k}\}$  converges strongly in  $L^s$  for any  $s \in [1, 2^*)$ , the limit function  $u$  satisfies  $(N)_0$  and

$$(3.8) \quad \int_{\Omega} u \psi m \, dx = 0.$$

It is easy to check that if  $u_1$  and  $u_2$  are solutions of  $(N)_0$  satisfying (3.8) then  $u_1 - u_2$  is a solution of (3.5) and therefore  $u_1 - u_2 = C$ . Hence by (3.8).

$$C \int_{\Omega} \psi m \, dx = 0$$

which implies  $C = 0$ . This proves that the whole sequence  $\{u_h\}$  converges weakly in  $H^1$  to  $u$ .  $\square$

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